
A POETICAL EPISTLE

ADDRESSED TO

MISS WOLLSTONECRAFT.

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Mrs. WOLFSTONCHAMPEL

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Miss WOLLSTONECRAFT.

OCCASIONED BY READING

HER CELEBRATED

ESSAY ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN,

AND HER

HISTORICAL AND MORAL VIEW OF THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION.

BY

JOHN HENRY COLLS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY

VERNOR AND HOOD, BIRCHIN-LANE, CORNHILL; AND G. AND T.
WILKIE, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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MRS. WOLSTONCRAFT

BY JOHN HENRY COLLIS



RIGHTS OF WOMAN

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HISTORICAL MORAL VIEW OF THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION

JOHN HENRY COLLIS

Dedication.

To Miss WOLLSTONECRAFT.

MADAM,

IF the following little Poem possesses any part of the true spirit of Poetry, it must be attributed to your excellence that inspired it — Yet, in subscribing to your mental acumen and logical definition, I would not have it understood as including my approbation of your political postulatam, as applied to the French Revolution. The system of Politics in France, resembles a Harlequin's jacket; in which, the component parts appear to be jumbled together without having any particular reference to each other. The populace, bursting from the bonds of slavery to revel in the vortex of unrestricted freedom, will not be easily convinced that their calamities

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lamities are the offspring of their newly-acquired Idol. In a state where Authority is not legally instituted and recognized by the body-politic, men will naturally revert to the first principle of nature ; and, acting from the impulse of the moment, remedy their particular inconveniencies at the expence of every social and moral obligation. To draw even an outline of what France may hereafter be, from its present motley appearance, is hardly possible. The contest is not to secure the national honour and prosperity, it is a struggle between individuals for authority ; and whilst each one imagines he has an interest independent of the whole, there can be no such thing as public confidence established. Unanimity should be the key-stone of the political structure ; and, if they are not in possession of *that*, the constitution must inevitably crumble to atoms.

Callous indeed must have been the heart, that did not exult in the emancipation of twenty-five millions of men, from the tyranny of a despotic Government ; but, how much

more

more callous must be the heart, that does not shrink with horror at the enormities resulting from a licentious abuse of their liberty. The Populace are neither philosophers nor politicians ; they know no difference between freedom and authority ; but, conceiving them to be one and the same, they imagine an exemption from restraint comprehends an unlimited licence for action : and this want of discrimination is likely to prove the bane of their prosperity.

Perhaps the enthusiasm with which you have entered upon the History of the French Revolution, may induce you to contemplate the vicissitudes attending it, with an eye that can discern no blemish, or, with a mind that can find a palliative for every error : and, whilst you are thus wrapt in admiration, you may probably pronounce the womb of futurity to be pregnant with more happiness to that nation, than time itself may be able to bring forth. But, whatever advantages may ultimately attend the Revolution, they are not likely to be experienced by the present generation. The spirit of in-

trigue

trigue that disgraced the old government and enslaved the people, has transmigrated to the Convention, and created a set of petty tyrants ; who, becoming dubious of each other, can never cordially unite, or act with energy in support of the general cause. Discord is perpetually fomented by different cabals ; and 'till there be one fixed and invariable principle to proceed upon, the most active are the most likely to be sacrificed at the altar of suspicion ; and it certainly requires a very considerable portion of faith to believe, that those men who have wantonly wrested from the innocent their property and their lives, will henceforth forbear to plunder ; and, imbibing the true spirit of patriotism, act only for the benefit of posterity.

What are the members of the National Convention, but self-created legislators, who have crept into power by procuring the assassination of their predecessors ; and who in turn will be swept away by the same means, as soon as possession shall have lull'd their vigilance to repose. We know by experience

perience that nothing but perfidy can be expected from men of bad principles ; and surely those who have violated the imprescriptible rights of nations, countenanced the banishment of wealthy but innocent individuals, and shared in the confiscation of their property, can give no substantial security for their *future good* intentions.

I should not have troubled you, Madam, with the foregoing sentiments, had it not been to convince you, that I can admire your abilities without subscribing myself a proselyte to your political creed.

I am respectfully Yours,

J. H. COLLS.

1852

Report of the Board of Directors of the

of the Corporation

for the year ending December 31, 1852

and of the State of New York

in relation to the

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OF THE

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POETICAL EPISTLE.

WHILST venal bards attune their dulcet lays,
In praise of those who scarce deserve their praise ;
Let me, from purer, nobler motives sing,
And mark what ills from EDUCATION spring ;
Tell how the Nymph of every charm possest
That lures the eye or thrills the feeling breast,
Bears thro' existence—to our *lasting shame*,
A mind enfeebled and a nerveless frame.
Shall men with men each social blessing share,
And doom to mean servility the fair ?

Unjustly claim an arbitrary sway,
 And reign the petty monarchs of a day ?
 No :—rigid Fate, of each alike the friend,
 Created *all* for *one* peculiar end ;
 And where the tyrant stalks with fancied pride,
 'Tis pow'r assum'd, or reason misapplied.
 'Twixt *mind* and *mind*, then say, ye learn'd and wise,
 In *what* and *where* the sexual difference lies ?
 If reasoning man the ethereal spheres can climb,
 And wing'd by thought outstrip the flight of time ;
 If, tracing nature's never erring laws,
 He springs enraptured to the first great cause ;
 Or mounts the fiery steed, and boldly rides
 Where grisly death triumphantly presides,
 And onward, spite of every danger goes,
 Resolv'd to perish or subdue his foes.
 If such exertions be to *men* confin'd,
 As most congenial to their bent of mind,
 Point out the sphere that suits the *female* best,
 And bring *her* sense and judgement to the test.

Whilst education damps ambition's flame,
 And wraps in dark obscurity her name ;
 Whilst low-born prejudice, unknowing why,
 Looks up to Genius with a jaundic'd eye ;
 And lordly man descends with envious spirit
 To pluck a feather from the wing of merit ;
 What wonder if th' indignant fair despise
 The only means by which they ought to rise,
 And finding talents meet such poor rewards,
 Devote their hours to fashion and to cards.

'Tis not for them, regardless of their health,
 In earth's dark womb to gather hoards of wealth ;
 'Tis not for them, by mad ambition whirl'd,
 To fly where glory has her flag unfurl'd,
 Or pass with missile weapons in their hands,
 O'er Zembla's wastes, or Afric's burning sands ;
 Far other views their sportive minds engage,
 The polish'd triflers, of a trifling age ;
 They rather love o'er midnight lamps to sit,
 And search the realms of sentiment and wit,

Or follow fancy in her airy dance,
 Thro' all the fairy scenes of wild romance,
 Till the fond heart in sympathy o'erflows
 With joys fictitious, or ideal woes :
 Yet should those scenes so glowingly pourtray'd
 In *real* life, assail the melting maid,
 Each tender feeling would forget to move,
 And cold indiff'rence conquer social love.

Who looks through life, with steady eye, will find,
One leading principle pervades mankind ;
 That, form'd by nature for the self same ends,
Each on the whole, for social blifs depends ;
 That, *Sex to Sex*, for mutual succour clings,
 And all our diff'rence from our treatment springs.
 What then is *Woman* on the *present plan* ?
 The splendid plaything of tyrannic man—
 His equal, only in a wanton hour,
 When lawless lust subdues the tyrant's pow'r ;
 Then, in the fervor of illicit love,
 He deems the fair an angel from above,

Enraptur'd gazes on her form and face,
And thinks each blemish a superior grace :
At length, all blushing, from the traitor's arms
She springs, divested of her wonted charms,
Condemn'd to bear, for having been too kind,
A frame polluted and a wounded mind.
Ye vile associates in corruption's cause,
Who break through nature's and religion's laws,
And seem ambitious only to destroy,
The opening blossom of domestic joy ;
Should death let fall life's curtain by surprize,
And sign your soul's dread passport to the skies,
Where faithful mem'ry all the past unfolds,
And God himself the rod of justice holds ;
O say, when ev'ry deed shall be reveal'd,
And not the shadow of a thought conceal'd,
What apt excuses will ye then assign
To ward the vengeance of a pow'r Divine ?
"Curst be the verse, how well so e'er it flows,"
That gives a death-wound to the mind's repose,

And may contempt obscure the *Poet's fame,
 Who brands the guiltless with a guilty name ;
 Gives truth the lie unmanly freedom takes,
 And says " all women at their hearts are rakes ;"
 Yet such *his merit*, and *his failings* such,
 We scarce can *praise* or *censure* him too much,
 With all the fervor of the nine possess,
 'Twas *his* to thrill with extacy the breast ;
 But ah ! when malice could direct a dart,
 Tipt with the rancour of an envious heart,
 Envenom'd slander nerv'd the polish'd line,
 And truth was sacrific'd at satire's shrine.

Should some bold author rise in just disdain,
 And burst the bonds of prejudice in twain ;

* " Some MEN to *business*, some to *pleasure* take,
 " But *ev'ry* WOMAN is at *heart* a rake.

POPE.

His goodness of heart must surely be very problematical, who could prefer such an infamous charge against the fair sex, and that too without excepting even his own mother.

With reason's force the laws of custom break,
And no distinction 'twixt the sexes make,
The *fair* would soon to honor's height arrive,
For minds like soils by cultivation thrive;
But erring man in folly's mad career,
To narrow bounds contracts the female's sphere,
And grossly thinks, by partial passions sway'd,
The sex created solely for his aid :
What time the fair-one, in the bloom of life,
Resolves " to be, or not to be"—a wife—
Parental force subverts her fix'd intent,
And gives her hand against her heart's consent :
Hence many a female, from her nuptial hour,
Becomes the victim of oppressive pow'r ;
Bears unrepining through successive years,
The painful burthen of domestic cares,
Each stern injunction of her lord obeys,
And all the slave's servility displays,
Flies where he bids, and as he pleases lives,
Nor tastes a bliss but what the tyrant gives.

Ask ye to whom this gloomy sketch applies ?
 'Tis *modern wedlock*, stript of all disguise,
 And many a wretch by sad experience finds,
 Amidst the conflict of opposing minds,
 That *lust* and *interest* in *connubial* life,
 Are bubbling sources of *perpetual* strife.
 The glowing bridegroom and the blushing bride,
 By kindred feelings should be close allied ;
 When Virtue's bonds congenial beings bind,
 Mind holds a mystic intercourse with Mind,
 And whilst esteem their mutual faith improves,
 And heart to heart with fond vibration moves,
 The *wish to please* extends to either breast,
 And each, in blessing, seems completely blest.

Too long has man, ambitious in his aims,
 Usurpt those rights which woman justly claims,
 Pour'd from his tongue harsh volleys of abuse,
 And held the fair subservient to his use ;
 But now, superior to each mean control,
 She shows her native dignity of soul,

Runs the bright course her kindred should have ran,
And throws the tyrant's fetters back to man.
Thus WOLLSTONECRAFT, by fiery genius led,
Entwines the laurel round the female's head ;
Contends with man for equal strength of mind,
And claims the rights estrang'd from womankind ;
Dives to the depths of science and of art,
And leaves to fools the conquest of the heart ;
Or mounts exulting through the fields of space,
On faith's strong pinions, to the throne of grace ;
Whence springs a transport that can never cloy,
In full assurance of eternal joy.

In active life whatever views we plan,
Each still is bound to do the best he can :
If unsuccessful, why should we repine ?
" To err is human, to forgive divine."
E'en those distinguished for superior worth,
And stamp'd with heaven-born genius at their birth ;
Who, led by wisdom and by science taught,
Explore the regions of abstracted thought,

And blaze like stars in disquisition's field ;
 In *common life* to *common failings* yield.
 Hence mean *suspicion* spread her murky stole,
 O'er polish'd SEWARD'S ever active soul ;
 Else, when a *fav'rite of the inspiring nine,
 With all the glow of energy divine,
 Unask'd, eulogiums in my favor penn'd,
 And warmly urg'd her to become my friend,
 The †*Palace* door, now bolted by command,
 Had shrunk submissive from my pressing hand,
 And she with kindred sympathy imprest,
 Pour'd forth a welcome to no vulgar guest.
 But tho' caprice denied the wish'd access,
 O! think not therefore, I esteem her less ;

* Mr. JERNINGHAM favor'd the author with an introductory letter to Miss SEWARD, but that lady (from prudential motives no doubt) refused to receive him—perhaps she was apprehensive he might become, from his connexion in the Theatre, an importuning acquaintance, and render her, as she before had been, a dupe to Theatrical artifice.—If her conduct originated from such motives, it may not be amiss to observe, that, tho' the author is *not above accepting of favors*—he has *never been accusom'd to solicit them*.—

† Miss SEWARD lives in the Bishop's Palace, Litchfield.

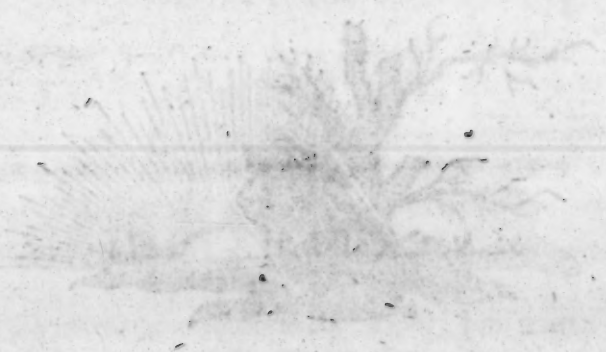
Pleas'd with her worth I reverence her name—
Inscrib'd by genius on the roll of fame ;
Yet, whilst ambition prompts *her* ardent mind,
To court the general homage of mankind ;
And whilst fair science guides *thy* ready pen,
To trace the jarring principles of men ;
May *I*, sequester'd in the vale of life,
Where rage no whirlwinds of tempestuous strife ;
May *I*, from *envy* and from *pride* remov'd,
Be *known* to *few*, and be by *them*—BELOV'D.



Please with her worth I reverence her name—
Inscribed by genius on the roll of fame
Yet whilst ambition prompts her ardent wish
To court the general homage of mankind
And whilst her science guides her ready pen
To trace the lasting principles of men
May I, deposited in the vale of life
Where rage no whirlwinds of tempestuous strife



May I from every art and science
Be deemed to have derived



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By JOHN HENRY COLLS *and* WILLIAM DYDE.

Not EMPIRE to the rising sun,
By valour, fortune, conduct, won;
Not highest WISDOM in debates
For framing laws to govern states;
Not skill in SCIENCES profound,
So large, to grasp the circle round:
Such heav'nly influence require,
AS HOW TO STRIKE THE MUSES LYRE. Swift.

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JOHN HENRY COLLS,

WILLIAM DYDE.

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